
ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name: National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), U.S. Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: Technology Opportunities Program

Announcement Type: Initial Announcement

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number(s): 11.552, Technology Opportunities Program

Dates: Applications must be either postmarked no later than April 27, 2004, or hand-delivered no later than 5:00 P.M. Eastern Standard Time on April 27, 2004.

Application Submission: Completed applications must be mailed, shipped, or sent overnight express to: Technology Opportunities Program, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, 1401 Constitution Avenue, NW, HCHB, Room 4096, Washington, DC 20230; or hand-delivered to Technology Opportunities Program, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, HCHB, Room 1874, 1401 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20230.

Funding Opportunity Description:

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) issues this *Announcement* describing the conditions under which applications will be received by the Technology Opportunities Program (TOP) and how NTIA will select applications for funding. As an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce, NTIA is the Executive Branch's principal voice on domestic and international telecommunications and information technology issues. NTIA works to spur innovation, encourage competition, help create jobs and support policies that provide consumers with more choices and better quality telecommunications products and services at lower prices.

TOP supports this mission through funding demonstrations of new telecommunications and information technology applications for the provision of “educational, health care, or public information” in the Nation’s public and non-profit sectors.¹

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Funding Program Description

The Technology Opportunities Program (TOP) is a highly competitive, merit-based matching grant program that promotes the use of advanced telecommunications and information technologies in the non-profit and public sectors. TOP provides organizations with the opportunity to explore the possibilities that new interactive technologies offer to improve the provision of “educational, health care, or public information.” These projects encourage the deployment of broadband infrastructure, services, and applications throughout the Nation.

With respect to educational information, TOP will support projects that expand training and learning opportunities or create innovative educational or training methods through the use of network technologies. In health care, TOP will support projects that use network technologies to improve the efficiency of, effectiveness of, or access to health-related services. TOP will support projects that enable the sharing and creation of a broad range of public information including, but not limited to, economic development opportunities; state, tribal, and local government services; community-based services; arts and humanities; and resources that promote self-sufficiency and an improved quality of life.

TOP projects demonstrate innovative applications of technology to pressing needs in the public and non-profit sectors. Rather than simply requesting funds to build capacity or upgrade existing equipment, each application must describe a *project* that pinpoints specific problems, proposes innovative solutions involving the application of telecommunications and information technologies, and provides realistic and measurable outcomes.

B. Funding Program Priorities

All funded projects must be interactive and foster the exchange and sharing of information among individuals and/or groups, as opposed to one-way or broadcast systems. These projects are expected

¹ Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2004, Pub. L. No. 108-199 (2004).

to serve as national models, even though the applicant may propose to pilot the project at the local level. Accordingly, priority will be given to projects that address problems of national significance, expand economic opportunities, enhance productivity, increase worker skills, and create jobs for American workers.

Funded projects must evidence a strong probability of replication in other communities throughout the United States. Priority also will be given to projects demonstrating the use of new telecommunications and information technologies. NTIA is especially interested in applications of wireless technologies including, but not limited to, WI-FI, unlicensed spectrum devices, and projects demonstrating the potential application of 3rd generation or Advanced Wireless Services. All projects are expected to advance the body of knowledge and expand service availability and effectiveness in their respective content areas. Each project must include provisions for a thorough, independent evaluation that will provide valid and reliable data as well as valuable lessons learned to be shared with others interested in the project.

C. Limitations on Project Scope

NTIA places a priority on avoiding duplication of other federal initiatives. As indicated in the “Selection Procedures” section of this *Announcement*, the selection official will recommend awards based, in part, on avoidance of redundancy with initiatives of other federal agencies. Therefore, applicants should carefully review other federal initiatives, and, if necessary, describe why they believe their project would not be eligible for support by other federal initiatives.

Each TOP project is expected to include a range of activities that support project development, implementation, and evaluation. However, TOP **will not support projects whose primary purpose** falls into the categories discussed below.

1. **Single-Organization Projects.** TOP *will not* support projects whose primary emphasis is on the internal communications needs of a single organization, even if the organization has a considerable number of offices or users in different cities or regions of the country.
2. **Infrastructure Development Projects.** Every TOP applicant is expected to create a project that describes and provides funding for specific applications of network technologies to address important community challenges. Therefore, TOP *will not* support projects whose primary purpose is to create telecommunications or network infrastructure without significant dedication of resources to specific applications of that infrastructure.
3. **Hardware or Software Development Projects.** Some projects may require limited software development or the customization or modification of existing software or hardware in order to meet particular end-user requirements or to enable the exchange of information across

networks. However, the creation of a software or hardware product *cannot* be a project's primary purpose.

4. **Training Projects.** While TOP considers training to be an essential aspect of most projects, TOP *will not* support projects whose primary or sole purpose is to provide training in the use of software applications, Internet use, or other network technologies.
5. **Voice-based Systems.** Two-way, interactive voice networks are an important element of existing network systems. Voice as a means for conveying information and voice input tools play critical roles in ensuring people with disabilities have access to network technology. However, TOP *will not* support projects whose primary purpose is to either build or install voice-based communication networks.
6. **Curriculum Development Projects.** As indicated in the "Eligibility Information" section of this *Announcement*, K-12 schools and non-profit entities that provide lifelong learning opportunities are eligible to apply for grants. However, TOP *will not* support projects whose primary purpose is to create curricula for K-12 students.

D. Authority

NTIA issues this *Announcement* pursuant to Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2004, Pub. L. No. 108-199 (2004).

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Approximately \$12.9 million is available for federal assistance under this program. Based on past experience, NTIA expects this year's grant round to be very competitive. In Fiscal Year 2003, NTIA received 569 applications collectively requesting more than \$269 million in federal funds. The Department of Commerce announced 28 awards totaling \$13.95 million in federal funds.

B. Project/Award Period

The minimum award period is 18 months. The maximum duration is 36 months. While the completion time will vary depending on the complexity of the project, NTIA has found that most grant recipients require at least two years to complete and evaluate fully their projects.

C. Award Amount

An applicant may request up to a total of \$700,000 in funds from NTIA. TOP expects the federal amounts awarded to range from \$350,000 to \$700,000, with an average of approximately \$500,000. The amount awarded covers the duration of the project.

D. Type of Funding Instrument

The funding instrument will be a grant.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Non-profit entities, public sector organizations as well as state, local and tribal governments are eligible to apply. Eligible applicants include, but are not limited to, faith-based organizations, national organizations and associations, non-profit community-based organizations, non-profit health care providers, schools, libraries, museums, colleges, universities, public safety providers, or other providers of social services.

For-profit organizations and individual persons are NOT eligible to apply. They are encouraged, however, to participate as project partners as described in the “Eligibility Information” and “Application Review Information” sections of this *Announcement*.

Applicants that have designated themselves as “for-profit organizations” or “individuals” in Question #7 on the Standard Form 424 (SF-424), *Application for Federal Assistance*, will not be considered in the current grant round, and their application will be returned.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

Grant recipients under this program will be required to provide matching funds toward the total project cost. Applicants must document their capacity to provide matching funds. Matching funds may be in the form of either cash or in-kind contributions.

NTIA will provide up to 50 percent of the total project cost, unless the applicant can document extraordinary circumstances warranting a grant of up to 75 percent. Grant funds under this program are usually released in direct proportion to the documented expenditure of matching funds.

Generally, federal funds may not be used as matching funds, except as provided by federal statute. If you plan to use funds from a federal agency as matching funds, you should contact the federal agency that administers the funds in question and obtain documentation from that agency's Office of General Counsel to support the use of federal funds for matching purposes.

Additional information on matching funds and how to prepare a budget are described in the *Guidelines for Preparing Applications—Fiscal Year 2004*.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Information about NTIA, TOP, and other resources to help prepare an application, including this document and the *Guidelines for Preparing Applications—Fiscal Year 2004*, can be retrieved electronically via the Internet at <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/top>. This document can be provided in alternate formats, including braille. If you need assistance please contact TOP at (202) 482-2048 or top@ntia.doc.gov or via the address listed below.

Technology Opportunities Program
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
HCHB, Room 4096
Washington, DC 20230

B. Content and Form of Applications

Each application must contain, at a minimum, the following required elements: (1) a Standard Form 424 (SF-424), *Application for Federal Assistance*, with an original signature, (2) a project narrative, and (3) a budget narrative. **Applications that are missing any of these three required elements with the appropriate signatures will not be accepted for review and will be returned to the applicants.**

Through TOP's online tools available at <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/top>, applicants can prepare and print a number of the required forms. In addition, applicants can use TOP's online tools to provide an

electronic version of their executive summary that will be available to the public. Please note that TOP's online tools are optional and not required to prepare an application. **Applicants must submit all application materials (even those forms prepared online) in hard copy with appropriate signatures. Applications will NOT be accepted via facsimile machine transmission or electronic mail.**

Reviewers will be instructed to ignore any portion of the application that extends beyond the prescribed page limits listed below. Additional information on how to prepare these elements is available in the *Guidelines for Preparing Applications—Fiscal Year 2004* which can be retrieved electronically via the Internet at <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/top>.

The executive summary must not exceed one (1) page.

The project narrative must not exceed eight (8) pages. The project narrative is the core component of the application. A table of contents or dividers to help organize the eight pages do not count against the eight-page limit.

The appendices must not exceed twenty-seven (27) pages. Appendices may include time lines, evaluation details, organizational charts, memoranda of understanding, technical designs, illustrations, maps, letters of support, brief bios of key staff, supporting documents, etc. However, do not include CD-ROMs, disks, videos or audio tapes in the application.

There is no page limit on the budget narrative.

The application must be typed, single-sided, single-spaced, on 8½" x 11" paper. Use a font of no less than 12 points with margins of no less than one inch (1").

TOP requests one original and five copies of the application for efficient processing. Applicants for whom the submission of five copies presents a hardship may submit the minimum required one original and two copies of the application.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Complete applications for the Fiscal Year 2004 TOP grant program must be either **postmarked no later than April 27, 2004**, or **hand-delivered no later than 5:00 P.M. Eastern Standard Time on April 27, 2004**, to the respective addresses listed in the Addresses Section of this *Announcement*. Applications delivered by guaranteed carrier services will be considered postmarked on the date they are submitted to the carrier.

Applications must show proof of mailing consisting of one of the following:

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1. A legibly dated U.S. Postal Service postmark. Please note that the U.S. Postal Service does not uniformly provide a dated postmark. Before relying on this method, applicants should check with their local post office.
 2. A legible mail receipt with the date of mailing stamped by the U.S. Postal Service.
 3. A dated shipping label, invoice, or receipt from a commercial carrier.

Neither of the following will be accepted as proof of mailing:

1. A private metered postmark.
2. A mail receipt that is not dated by the U.S. Postal Service.

Applications with postmarked dates after April 27, 2004, will not be considered in the current grant round and will be returned to the applicant. Applications will NOT be accepted via facsimile machine transmission or electronic mail.

Completed applications must be mailed, shipped, or sent overnight express to:

Technology Opportunities Program
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
HCHB, Room 4096
Washington, DC 20230

or hand-delivered to:

Technology Opportunities Program
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
HCHB, Room 1874
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Room 1874 is located at entrance #10 on 15th Street NW, between Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues.

United States Postal Service's Priority Mail, First Class Mail, and Parcel Post packages delivered to the Department of Commerce are irradiated. Irradiation could result in damage to the contents, or delay the delivery of an application to the TOP Program Office. Thus, applicants are encouraged to consider the impact of these procedures in selecting their chosen method for application delivery.

D. Funding Restrictions

Below is a discussion of eligible and ineligible costs. More details and guidance on how to prepare a budget are available in the *Guidelines for Preparing Applications—Fiscal Year 2004*.

Eligible Costs. Allowable costs incurred under approved projects shall be determined in accordance with applicable federal cost principles, i.e., OMB Circulars A-21, A-87, A-122, or Appendix E of 45 C.F.R. Part 74. If included in the approved project budget, TOP will allow costs for personnel; fringe benefits; computer hardware, software, and other end-user equipment; telecommunications services and related equipment; consultants, evaluators, and other contractual items; travel; rental of office equipment, furniture, and space; and supplies.

Ineligible Costs. Costs associated with the construction or major renovation of buildings are not eligible. While costs for the construction of new network facilities are eligible, applicants are expected to make use of existing infrastructure and commercially available telecommunications services. Only under extraordinary circumstances will the construction of new network facilities be approved.

Costs for professional services are also ineligible. TOP defines professional services as activities delivered over a network that would otherwise be provided in a face-to-face setting such as teaching students, counseling clients, providing direct patient care, interpreting services, etc. For example, if the project proposes to create a telemedicine network, the health professionals' time dedicated to consulting with patients over the network **is not** an eligible cost. However, the time health professionals spend facilitating the communication, setting-up the telecommunications equipment, ensuring the proper operation of the equipment, or evaluating the use of the network **would be** eligible.

In addition, the Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2004, places restrictions on eligible project costs for applicants that are recipients of Universal Service Fund discounts and applicants receiving assistance from the Department of Justice's Regional Information Sharing Systems Program as part of the project costs. The statute provided:

That, notwithstanding any other provision of law, no entity that receives telecommunications services at preferential rates under section 254(h) of the Act (47 U.S.C. 254(h)) or receives assistance under the regional information sharing systems grant program of the Department

of Justice under part M of Title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3796h) may use funds under a grant under this heading to cover any costs of the entity that would otherwise be covered by such preferential rates or such assistance, as the case may be.²

Accordingly, recipients of the above-described preferential rates or assistance are prohibited from including any costs that would be covered by such preferential rates or assistance in their proposed TOP grant budget.

Please note that costs ineligible for TOP support may not be included as matching funds.

Use of Program Income. Applicants are advised that any program income generated by a proposed project is subject to special conditions. Anticipated program income must be documented appropriately in the project budget. In addition, should an application be funded, *unanticipated* program income must be reported to TOP, and the budget for the project must be renegotiated to reflect receipt of this program income. Program income means gross income earned by the recipient that is either directly generated by a supported activity, or earned as a result of the award. In addition, federal policy prohibits any recipient or subrecipient receiving federal funds from the use of equipment acquired with these funds to provide services to non-federal outside organizations for a fee that is less than private companies charge for equivalent services. This prohibition does not apply to services provided to outside organizations at no cost.

International Components of Projects. While TOP projects may include international components, all federal and matching funds must be directed toward improving the provision of “educational, health care, or public information” in the United States of America.

E. Other Submission Requirements

All applications must be submitted in hard copy and include the elements and required signatures described in the “Content and Form” section above.

Applicants may use TOP’s online tools to provide an electronic version of their executive summary that will be available to the public. TOP’s online tools are optional and not required to prepare an application.

V. Application Review Information

² Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2004, Pub. L. No. 108-199, (2004).

A. Criteria

Reviewers will analyze and rate each application using the following criteria. The relative weights of each criterion are identified in parentheses.

1. Project Purpose (20%)

Each application must describe a clearly defined project that uses telecommunications and information technology for the provision of “educational, health care, or public information.”

In assessing the project purpose, reviewers will examine the degree to which the applicant clearly describes and convincingly links three major elements: (1) the problem(s) to be addressed, (2) the proposed solution, and (3) the anticipated outcomes of the project.

Based on documentation provided by the applicant, reviewers will assess the severity of the identified problem(s) and need(s) and the extent to which the problem addressed is of national significance. With respect to the proposed solution, reviewers will assess the degree to which the use of network technologies will address the identified problem(s) and whether the solution evidences a strong probability for replication across the Nation. With respect to anticipated project outcomes, reviewers will assess the degree to which the proposed outcomes of the project are realistic and measurable.

2. Innovation (30%)

TOP defines innovation broadly to include applications that both demonstrate new technologies and projects that demonstrate how applications of new technology can be creatively used to address the needs of the non-profit and public sectors.

While TOP encourages applicants to experiment with leading edge technologies, the level of creativity in the application of technology will be the primary factor in evaluating the level of innovation. TOP encourages applicants to demonstrate how new technologies can be applied to bring about new services, as well as increase the efficiency, effectiveness, and reach of public services in ways that directly benefit the Nation.

Using experience gained in their respective fields, reviewers will examine each project in a national context. In evaluating the innovative qualities of each application, reviewers will assess how an application compares with, complements, and improves on what is known about using telecommunications and information technology in the non-profit and public sectors.

Approaches to innovation may include projects that introduce new technologies; projects that use technology to provide services in new or more effective ways; or projects that explore untested strategies for overcoming barriers to access.

3. Community Involvement (10%)

Each application will be rated on the level of community involvement in the development and operation of the proposed project.

- (1) Reviewers will analyze the applicant's partnerships to ensure that they include linkages among unaffiliated organizations (from the public, non-profit, or private sectors) as an ongoing and integral part of project planning and operation. TOP considers partners to be organizations that contribute matching funds by supplying cash, in-kind resources (including personnel, equipment, facilities, etc.), and are actively involved in the planning and operation of the project.
- (2) Reviewers will consider the degree of attention paid to the needs, skills, working conditions, and living environments of the targeted end users.³ Reviewers will consider the extent to which applicants involve representatives from a broad range of potential users in both the design and operation of the project and consider the varying degrees of abilities of all end users, including individuals with disabilities. Reviewers will also assess the degree to which the project addresses barriers which limit a community's or a group's access to network technologies. Reviewers will assess the applicant's plans for training end users and upgrading their skills.
- (3) Reviewers will examine the steps the applicant has taken to include and sustain the involvement of a variety of community stakeholders. Reviewers will look for documented evidence of demand—from the community, end users, and potential beneficiaries—for the services proposed by the project.
- (4) Reviewers will assess the commitment of community partners to the long term sustainability of the project after the federal grant period.

4. Evaluation (10%)

Each application will be rated on its proposed evaluation plan. Reviewers will assess the evaluation design for: (1) plans to document how the project is conducted so others may adapt or replicate it; (2) evaluation questions to measure the stated outcomes; (3) data collection plan; (4) resources allocated; (5) the qualifications of any staff or external evaluators working on the evaluation; and (6) the degree to which it meets TOP's requirements for an independent evaluation as described in the "Award Administration Information" section of this *Announcement*.

³ An "end user" is an individual who directly uses the network technology.

5. Project Feasibility (20%)

In assessing the feasibility of each application, reviewers will focus on six issues: the technical approach, the qualifications of the project staff, the implementation schedule, plans for protecting privacy, the applicant's plan for sustaining the project beyond the grant period, and disseminating the lessons learned.

- (1) In assessing the technical approach, reviewers will examine the technical feasibility of the proposed system, the degree to which the proposed approach will work and interoperate with other systems, and plans for maintenance and periodic upgrades. Applicants are expected to make use of existing infrastructure and commercially available telecommunications services, unless extraordinary circumstances require the construction of new network facilities.
- (2) In assessing the qualifications of the project team, reviewers will assess the applicant and its partners to determine if they have the financial resources, expertise, and experience necessary to undertake, evaluate, and complete the project and disseminate results within the proposed project period.
- (3) Reviewers will assess the degree to which the proposed project, from implementation through evaluation, will be completed in the proposed time frame.
- (4) Reviewers will evaluate the applicant's plans to safeguard the privacy of the project's end users and others affected by the project.
- (5) Reviewers will examine the applicant's strategies to sustain the project after the completion of the grant.
- (6) Finally, with respect to dissemination, reviewers will assess the applicant's plans and capacity for sharing the best practices and lessons learned from the project's successes and failures.

6. Project Budget (10%)

Reviewers will analyze the budget for clarity and cost-effectiveness. They also will assess the reasonableness of the proposed budget and whether the allocation of funds is sufficient to complete the tasks outlined in the project narrative.

B. Review and Selection Process

NTIA anticipates the processing and selection of applications for funding will require six months. The selection process involves four stages outlined below

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1. During the first stage, each eligible application will be reviewed by a panel of at least three outside peer reviewers who have demonstrated expertise in both the programmatic and technological aspects of the application. The peer review panel members will evaluate applications according to the review criteria provided in this *Announcement* and provide ratings to the program staff. As discussed below, these ratings constitute one of the selection factors to be used by the TOP Director when preparing the slate of recommended grant awards.
 2. Upon completion of the external peer review process, program staff will analyze applications considered for award to assess: (1) whether a proposed project meets the program's funding scope as described in the section entitled "Limitations on Project Scope"; (2) the eligibility of costs and matching funds included in an application's budget; and (3) the extent to which an application complements or duplicates projects previously funded or under consideration by NTIA or other federal programs.⁴

The TOP Director then prepares and presents a slate of recommended grant awards to the Office of Telecommunications and Information Applications' (OTIA) Associate Administrator for review and approval.⁵ The Director's recommendations and the Associate Administrator's review and approval will take into account the following selection factors:

- (1) the evaluations of the outside peer reviewers;
- (2) the analysis of program staff;
- (3) the degree to which the proposed grants meet the program's purpose as described in the section entitled "Program Description";
- (4) the degree to which the proposed grants use technology to expand economic opportunities, enhance productivity, increase worker skills, and create jobs for American workers;
- (5) the geographic distribution of the proposed grant awards;
- (6) the variety of technologies and diversity of uses of the technologies employed by the proposed grant awards;
- (7) the provision of access to and use of telecommunications and information technologies by underserved groups and local communities suffering from economic downturns;

⁴ See discussion of "Funding Restrictions" and "Cost Share or Matching" in this *Announcement*. Information on previously funded grants is available from the TOP website at <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/top> or by contacting TOP at the address listed in "Application and Submission Information" information section of this *Announcement*.

⁵ The Office of Telecommunications and Information Applications is the division of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration that supervises NTIA's grant awards programs.

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- (8) the “expansion of commercial entities to enable local communities to attract commercial investment to spur growth of American jobs, especially in the areas of education, health care, and public information”;⁶
 - (9) avoidance of redundancy and conflicts with the initiatives of other federal agencies; and,
 - (10) the availability of funds.
3. Upon approval by the OTIA Associate Administrator, the Director’s recommendations will then be presented to the Selecting Official, the NTIA Administrator. The NTIA Administrator selects the applications to be negotiated for possible grant award taking into consideration the Director’s recommendations and the degree to which the slate of applications, taken as a whole, satisfies the selection factors described above and the program’s stated purposes as set forth in the section entitled “Program Description.” In making the selection, the Administrator may consult with senior officials in the Office of the Secretary to ensure that such selection factors and the program’s stated purposes have been met.
 4. After applications have been selected in this manner, negotiations will take place between TOP staff and the applicant. These negotiations are intended to resolve any differences that exist between the applicant’s original request and what TOP proposes to fund and, if necessary, to clarify items in the application. Not all applicants who are contacted for negotiation will necessarily receive a TOP award. Upon the conclusion of negotiations, final selections made by the Assistant Secretary will be based upon the recommendations of the TOP Director and the OTIA Associate Administrator and the degree to which the slate of applications, taken as a whole, satisfies the program’s stated purposes as set forth in the section entitled “Program Description.”

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will be notified in writing by the Department of Commerce’s Grants Officer.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements:

Depending on the nature of the project, the Grants Officer may assign special award conditions to a grant awardee.

⁶ See H. Rep. No. 108-221, at 79 (2003) (Report accompanying H.R. 2799, Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State, the Judiciary, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, Fiscal Year 2004).

C. Reporting

To ensure compliance with federal regulations and collect systemic evaluation data on each project, successful TOP applicants have a number of basic reporting requirements once they are awarded a grant. At project outset, TOP grantees provide detailed baseline information on the project objectives, goals, partners, and populations served. Grantees then provide biannual financial reports and quarterly updates on project activities. At project completion, TOP grantees must also provide a closeout report and a separate evaluation report prepared by an independent evaluator.

To ensure the validity of the findings, the evaluation report must be completed by an independent evaluator or team of evaluators who are not in a direct reporting relationship with the applicant.⁷ TOP will make copies of the final evaluation report and data collection instruments available to the public.

VII. Agency Contact(s)

Wayne Ritchie by telephone: (202) 482-2048; fax: (202) 501-8009; or e-mail: top@ntia.doc.gov.

VIII. Other Information

Policy on Sectarian Activities. NTIA encourages applications from faith-based organizations. On December 22, 1995, NTIA issued a *Notice* in the *Federal Register* on its policy with regard to sectarian activities. Under NTIA's policy, while religious activities cannot be the essential thrust of a grant, an application will be eligible where sectarian activities are only incidental or attenuated to the overall project purpose for which funding is requested. Applicants for whom this policy may be relevant should read the policy that was published in the *Federal Register* at 60 FR 66491, December 22, 1995.

Waiver Authority. It is the general intent of NTIA not to waive any of the provisions set forth in this *Announcement*. However, under extraordinary circumstances and when it is in the best interest of the federal government, NTIA, upon its own initiative or when requested, may waive the provisions in this *Announcement*. Waivers may only be granted for requirements that are discretionary and not mandated by statute. Any request for a waiver must set forth the extraordinary circumstances for the request and be included in the application or sent to the address provided in the "Address to Request Application Package" section.

⁷ In large institutions, such as universities, colleges, and foundations, an independent evaluator can include a representative from a department not associated with the applicant. TOP's requirement that an independent evaluator develop the final evaluation report *does not preclude* an applicant from working closely with the independent evaluator.

Complete applications for the Fiscal Year 2004 TOP grant program **must be either postmarked no later than April 27, 2004**, or hand-delivered no later than 5:00 P.M. Eastern Standard Time on April 27, 2004, to the respective addresses listed in the “Addresses” section. NTIA will **not** waive this requirement.

Disposition of Unsuccessful Applications. Applications accepted for review for the Fiscal Year 2004 grant round will be stored at the Department of Commerce until the start of the next grant competition or one year, whichever period is longer. At the end of that period, the applications will be destroyed.

Sensitive Information. Because of the high level of public interest in projects supported by TOP, the program anticipates receiving requests for copies of successful applications. Applicants are hereby notified that the applications they submit are subject to the Freedom of Information Act. To assist NTIA in making disclosure determinations, applicants may identify sensitive information and label it “confidential.”

Human Subjects Research Protection. The Department of Commerce, through Part 27 of Title 15 of the Code of Federal Regulations, requires that all applications awarded under the TOP ensure protections for any human subjects involved in research.

If an application is considered for funding, the grant applicant will be asked to submit appropriate documentation of Institutional Review Board approval or exemption status to the Federal Program Officer for approval by Department officials. More details on human subjects research protection are available through the TOP’s website at <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/top> and the *Guidelines for Preparing Applications—Fiscal Year 2004*.

Pre-Award Grant Requirements. The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the *Federal Register Notice* of October 1, 2001 (66 FR 49917), as amended by *Federal Register Notice* published on October 30, 2002 (67 FR 66109), is applicable to this solicitation.

Universal Identifier. Applicants should be aware that, for programs that have deadline dates on or after October 1, 2003, they will be required to provide a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number during the application process. See the June 27, 2003 (68 FR 38402) *Federal Register Notice* for additional information or the Office of Management and Budget’s website at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/duns_num_guide.pdf. Organizations can receive a DUNS number at no cost by calling the dedicated toll-free DUNS Number request line at 1-866-705-5711 or via the Internet at <http://www.dunandbradstreet.com>. Instructions on where to include the DUNS Number on the Standard Form SF 424 are available through the TOP’s website at <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/top> and the *Guidelines for Preparing Applications—Fiscal Year 2004*.

Limited English Proficiency. Executive Order 13166, “Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency,” requires all Departments and agencies to eliminate, to the maximum extent possible, limited English proficiency as an artificial barrier to the full and meaningful participation by beneficiaries in federally assisted and federally conducted programs and activities. The Department of Commerce is in the process of implementing this Executive Order, and all FY 2004 TOP grantees will be required to comply with the Department’s final guidelines.

Other Requirements. It has been determined that this *Announcement* is not significant for purposes of E.O. 12866.

Administrative Procedure Act/Regulatory Flexibility Act. Prior notice and an opportunity for public comments are not required by the Administrative Procedure Act or any other law for rules concerning grants, benefits, and contracts (5 U.S.C. 553). Because notice and opportunity for comment are not required pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553 or any other law, the analytic requirements of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) are inapplicable. Therefore, a regulatory flexibility analysis has not been prepared.

Executive Order 13132 (Federalism). It has been determined that this *Announcement* does not contain policies with Federalism implications as that term is defined in E.O. 13132.

Intergovernmental Review. Applications under this program are subject to Executive Order 12372, “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.” All applicants are required to submit a copy of their application to their state Single Point of Contact (SPOC) offices, if they have one. For information on contacting state SPOC offices, refer to the *Guidelines for Preparing Applications—Fiscal Year 2004*.

Paperwork Reduction Act. This document contains collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA). The use of Standard Forms 424, 424A, 424B, and SF-LLL have been approved by OMB under the respective control numbers 0348-0043, 0348-0044, 0348-0040, and 0348-0046.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number.

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